

Using Wikisource in Your Ukrainian Research

Joseph B. Everett, AG®, MLS

Overview: *Thanks to the work of Alex Krakovsky and other volunteers and donors helping him, records from Ukraine are being digitized and made available for free online on Wikisource. Learn more about this project and how to find records on Wikisource for your Ukrainian research.*

Introduction

For several years now, Alex Krakovsky, a native Ukrainian and private genealogy researcher with Jewish roots, has been digitizing records in Ukrainian archives and making them available for free on Wikisource. While initially focusing mainly on Jewish records, Alex has expanded efforts to include records of other religious groups as well as civil and other government records.

At times, Ukrainian archive officials have resisted the digitization efforts, but Alex has been able to win in court for rights to digitize based on Ukrainian archive law which makes the records public. Alex has had help along with the legal battles and with the scanning itself from volunteers and donors. The digitization efforts continue today in the midst of war, helping to ensure that these the precious heritage of the people of Ukraine is preserved.

To learn more about Alex's work and for latest updates, follow him on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/alex.krakovsky>. Read more about his legal battles to obtain the right to digitize archive records here: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/4555727/blog/khroniky/5581535/access-and-digitization-trial-alex-krakovskys-archival-battle>.

Wikisource Ukraine Project: Arkhiv

All the records that Alex and friends have been digitizing in Ukrainian archives are available for free on the Ukrainian version of Wikisource. Wikisource is a free digital library from the Wikimedia Foundation, the same organization that runs Wikipedia. It is a place to store public domain or freely licensed professionally published works or historical source documents. The site is available in many languages.

The Ukrainian archive records digitized by Alex and friends are stored under the project Archives (Архіви/Arkhiv). You can link directly to the project main page here: <https://uk.wikisource.org/wiki/Архіви>. You can also get there by going to Wikisource (<https://wikisource.org/>) selecting Українська (Ukrainian) as the language, then looking for a link to Архіви (Archives) on the left sidebar under Проекти (Projects). You can navigate the site in English using Google Chrome by right-clicking and selecting "Translate to English." (Beware of funny Google translations for some text.)

Find Records in the Wikisource Ukrainian Archives Project

The records of the Ukrainian Archives project are mostly organized in the same way as the archives. In most cases, to navigate to records, you need to browse the links in this order:

- Select an archive (grouped by country, mostly Ukraine)
- Select the time period (or other major collection grouping), such as Pre-1917, Soviet Period, Independent Ukraine, etc.
- Browse by selecting the collection (fond/fund), sub-collection inventory (opis) and item (delo). See more information about this below.
- Selecting a specific item to view the image.

The records are not indexed, so there is no name search. The only way to find them is to browse, and then search the items image by image. This may seem laborious, but considering the alternative of searching the same records in the archive in their original paper form, this is relatively easy.

Selecting the Archive

Most genealogical records in Ukraine are found in regional state archives, located in the capital cities of each of the states (oblasts) of Ukraine. Most scanning efforts have focused there, though there have also been records scanned in national archives and its branches. Soviet and modern boundaries of Ukrainian states (oblasts) and counties (rayons) are different than the pre-1917 historic empire boundaries of provinces (guberniyas) and counties (uyezds). For the most part, records of individual places are kept in the archives of the state where the place is located today, but they might alternatively be found in archives of a neighboring state due to boundary changes. You will need to do your homework on the geography to figure out which archives to look in.

Archival Arrangement

Records in Ukrainian archives (like other former USSR archives) are organized into large record collections (fonds/funds), which are divided into different sub-collection inventories (opisi), which consist of numerous individual items (dela), such as individual books, file folders, boxes, etc.). Each of these units has a number and together they form a unique archival reference number. The terms for these are:

Фонд (Fond) №

- Fond or fund (i.e. record group or collection) often abbreviated as ф. Google may also translate it as “stock”.

Опись (Opis) №

- Inventory, register (i.e. sub-collection or series). Often abbreviated as оп. or just о. The same word also means finding aid. Google may also translate it as “description.”

Дело (Delo) №

- Item, such as an individual book, box, or file folder, or even a single document). Often abbreviated as д. Plural is дела. Google may also translate it as “affairs.”

Record collections (fonds) are generally based on the institutions that created them and the type of records. It is not always clear from the collection descriptions what they contain. Some are more intuitive than others. Here are three examples, with a description of what they contain.

Fond №	Name of Fond	Years	Contents
1455	Collection of documents of churches of Kyiv and Poltava provinces	1762–1919	Various church documents, including metrical books of births, marriages, and deaths
280	Kyiv Chamber of Treasury, Kyiv	1775–1920	Various chamber of treasury documents, including poll tax records (revision lists).
384	Kyiv provincial commission of the first general population census in 1897, Kyiv	1895–1897	Documents relating to the 1897, including the census returns (where they exist.)

Within collections, the records are generally arranged geographically and chronologically. Pre-1917 records are usually arranged based on the historic empire boundaries—provinces (guberniyas) and counties (uyzeds)—and post 1917 records are usually arranged based on the Soviet/Modern boundaries, the states/regions (oblasts) and districts (rayons). The geographic arrangement might be reflected in the fond, inventory, or the individual item listings.

Navigating to Specific Items

To find things in the Wikisource Ukrainian Archives project site, it is easiest when you already know the right archive and the archive reference numbers (fond, opis, and delo). Then you can quickly browse right to the documents. This information might be found through other research in archive catalogs or finding aids, record indexes, or research guides, online or in print.

If you don't have this information already, you can browse on the Wikisource Ukrainian Archives project site, reading the fond, opis, and delo descriptions to find relevant records. As noted above, some will be more collection descriptions that are more intuitive than others. For some, you may need to do some research to figure out what to look under, such as looking for revision lists under the treasury department (казенна палата).

Google translate can produce odd results. For example Ревізькі казки (reviski kazki) which means revision lists, is translate by Google as “Reviz fairy tales” since the word казки can mean account as in record or account as in tale or story. You may want to view the page in the Ukrainian and then look up the words to look for alternate definitions if it doesn't make sense.

Once you get to a specific item, you can click the thumbnail image to view the record images, beginning with the first image. From there you can page through the images, download individual images at various resolutions, or download the full item as a PDF file.

Support the Project

If you are interested in donating to support the scanning effort, there is a [GoFundMe project](#) administered by Brooke Schreier Ganz.